



Economic Status of American Indians in Montana

A Preliminary Assessment

by Paul E. Polzin and Dennis O'Donnell

Editor's note: The State/Tribal Economic Development Commission is beginning work on a first-ever comprehensive assessment of the economic status of American Indians in Montana. The Commission has asked the Bureau to look at data to help with the assessment.

As a first step, the Bureau studied selected data from the 2000 Census of Population, analyzed the attitudes and opinions of American Indians about work-related topics, and provided an explanation for different measures of American Indian unemployment.

The following report has been submitted to the Commission, but does not represent their position or opinions.

Characteristics of American Indians on Montana Reservations

The decennial census provides unique once-a-decade data on a variety of economic and demographic characteristics. The 2000 Census included a new feature allowing analysis of American Indians living on reservations. Census data are not perfect because their accuracy depends on completeness, and this has been an issue on Indian reservations. Nevertheless, the census data provide information that is not available elsewhere.

According to the 2000 Census, there were 65,945 self-identified American Indians in Montana, or about 7.3 percent of the total population. Approximately 37,871 American Indians, or about 57.4 percent, lived on one of the state's seven reservations.

As shown in Table 1, the Blackfeet and the Flathead reservations were the largest, with 8,665 and 7,853 American Indian residents, respectively. Rocky Boy's (2,598) and the Fort Belknap (2,805) reservations were the smallest.

American Indians are not the only people living on reservations. Across all seven reservations in Montana, approximately 59.6 percent of the residents said they were American Indians. This percentage varies significantly from one reservation to another. About 97.1

percent of the residents of Rocky Boy's and roughly 94.89 percent of the Fort Belknap reservations identified themselves as American Indians. By contrast, American Indians are a minority on the Flathead Reservation; only 30 percent of the population identified themselves as American Indian.

American Indians are, on average, much younger than other Montanans. The median age for American Indians was 24.1 years, as compared with 37.5 years for the total population of Montana. The youngest American Indians were on the Northern Cheyenne and Rocky Boy's reservations, with medians of 20.2 and 20.1 years, respectively. The oldest were on the Fort Peck Reservation, where the median age was 30.2 years.

The lower median age for American Indians can be attributed to two factors – relatively few elderly people and far more young people. Data not presented in Table 2 show that in 2000, about 39 percent of American Indians were less than 18 years of age, as compared with 25 percent of the

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Table 1
American Indians and Total Persons
Montana and American Indian Reservations,
2000

	Total Persons	American Indians	Percent of Total
Montana	902,195	65,945	7.3%
Total All Reservations	63,592	37,871	59.6%
Blackfeet Reservation	10,100	8,665	85.8%
Crow Reservation	6,894	5,274	76.5%
Flathead Reservation	26,172	7,853	30.0%
Fort Belknap Reservation	2,959	2,805	94.8%
Fort Peck Reservation	10,321	6,574	63.7%
No. Cheyenne Reservation	4,470	4,102	91.8%
Rocky Boy's Reservation	2,676	2,598	97.1%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000 Census of Population and Housing.

Table 2
Age and Housing Status, Montana and American Indian Reservations, 2000

	Median Age (years)			Occupied Housing Units				
	Both Sexes	Males	Females	Total	Owner Occupied	Percent of Total	Renter Occupied	Percent of Total
Montana Total	37.5	36.6	38.5	358,667	247,723	69.1	110,944	30.9
Montana American Indians	24.1	23.0	25.4	19,149	9,690	50.6	9,459	49.4
Blackfeet Reservation	24.5	23.0	26.1	2,429	1,351	55.6	1,078	44.4
Crow Reservation	23.1	21.7	24.2	1,861	1,320	70.9	541	29.1
Flathead Reservation	24.1	22.9	25.6	2,646	1,600	60.5	1,046	39.5
Fort Belknap Reservation	22.0	21.0	23.7	772	419	54.3	353	45.7
Fort Peck Reservation	30.2	29.2	31.3	1,764	930	52.7	834	47.3
No. Cheyenne Reservation	20.2	19.4	21.4	1,021	524	51.3	497	48.7
Rocky Boy's Reservation	20.1	19.3	20.9	618	265	42.9	353	57.1

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000 Census of Population and Housing.

total population. About 5 percent of American Indians were over 65 years old, while 13.5 percent of Montana's population was over 65.

In 2000, American Indians occupied about 19,145 housing units in Montana. About 50.6 percent of the Indian households were owner-occupied, as compared to 69.1 percent for the entire population. The highest percentages for American Indian owner-occupied housing were on the Crow and Flathead reservations, reporting 70.9 percent and 60.5 percent of the total, respectively. The Fort Belknap, Fort Peck, and the Northern Cheyenne reservations reported roughly equal owner-occupied figures of 51 to 54 percent. Approximately 42.9 percent of the American Indian housing units on the Rocky Boy's Reservation were owner-occupied.

American Indians generally reported fewer years of education than other Montanans. There are indications, however, that specialized programs and tribal colleges are having a measurable impact on the educational attainment of Indians in Montana. Approximately 25.6 percent of all Montanans said they had some post-high-school education, and 5.9 percent said they had earned an associate degree (Table 3). Both of these figures were higher among American Indians, and they were much higher on several reservations. For example, 14.6 percent of the American Indians on both the Fort Belknap and Rocky Boy's reservations said they had associate degrees, more than double the statewide average. Tribal colleges emphasize two-year and other non-degree programs, which would result in the higher percentages in these two categories.

American Indians are employed in a wide variety of industries (Table 4). Health care and social assistance was the largest category, employing about 3,353 American Indians statewide. Public administration (which includes all



Table 3
Educational Attainment
American Indians and Others 25 Years and Older
Montana and American Indian Reservations, 2000

	Montana				American Indians					
	Total Population		American Indians		Blackfeet Reservation		Crow Reservation		Flathead Reservation	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
12 th Grade or less (no diploma)	75,358	12.8	7,489	23.1	1,058	24.9	592	23.4	896	24.2
High School Graduate (includes GED)	183,415	31.3	9,634	29.7	1,089	25.7	756	29.9	1,141	30.8
Some post HS, no degree	150,467	25.6	8,756	27.0	1,165	27.5	784	31.0	913	24.6
Associate Degree	34,420	5.9	2,844	8.8	524	12.4	132	5.2	301	8.1
Bachelor's Degree	100,758	17.2	2,595	8.0	245	5.8	199	7.9	296	8.0
Graduate Degree	42,203	7.2	1,098	3.4	161	3.8	62	2.5	157	4.2
Persons 25 years and older	586,621	100.0	32,416	100.0	4,242	100.0	2,525	100.0	3,704	100.0

	American Indians							
	Fort Belknap Reservation		Fort Peck Reservation		No. Cheyenne Reservation		Rocky Boy's Reservation	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
12 th Grade or less (no diploma)	329	25.2	811	27.3	468	26.3	213	19.8
High School Graduate (includes GED)	236	18.1	967	32.5	542	30.4	284	26.4
Some post HS, No degree	414	31.7	707	23.8	438	24.6	313	29.1
Associate Degree	190	14.6	241	8.1	190	10.7	157	14.6
Bachelor's Degree	104	8.0	211	7.1	121	6.8	71	6.6
Graduate Degree	31	2.4	38	1.3	21	1.2	39	3.6
Persons 25 years and older	1,304	100.0	2,975	100.0	1,780	100.0	1,077	100.0

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000 Census of Population and Housing.

forms of government) and educational services were second and third, employing 3,200 and 2,660 respectively.

The employment distributions reflect the differing economies of the reservations. The relatively high percentage of mine workers on the Crow and Northern Cheyenne reservations, both more than double the statewide average, are testimony to coal mines in the area. The relatively large number of Indians employed in health care on the Crow Reservation may reflect the Bureau of Indian Affairs hospital there.

Manufacturing accounted for 11.9 percent of the employed American Indians on the Flathead Reservation, almost twice the statewide figure. This large percentage was due to the local wood products industry, Jore Manufacturing, and the tribes' economic development efforts emphasizing manufacturing activities. The manufacturing percentage may understate the true figure because some employees of tribal

manufacturing firms may not have considered themselves as tribal employees. This potential misclassification may also explain the relatively low reported figure for manufacturing on the Fort Peck Reservation, where A&S Industries and other manufacturing enterprises are important tribal undertakings.

The median household income for American Indians was \$22,824, more than \$10,000 less than the \$33,024 reported for all Montanan households (Table 5).

The median household income on the Crow Reservation was \$28,199, almost \$10,000 more than the \$18,484 reported on the Fort Peck Reservation. This difference was not because of a few wealthy people; the Crow Reservation actually reported the lowest percentage of households in the \$100,000 or greater category. A closer look at the figures reveals that the Crow Reservation reported by far the lowest percentage in the less than \$10,000 income category.

Table 4
Employment by Industry
Montana and American Indian Reservations, 2000

	Montana				American Indians					
	Total Population		American Indians		Blackfeet Reservation		Crow Reservation		Flathead Reservation	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	29,109	6.8	1,096	5.2	310	9.9	65	4.2	178	6.9
Mining	4,582	1.1	273	1.3	0	0.0	51	3.3	9	0.3
Construction	31,724	7.4	1,730	8.1	206	6.5	54	3.5	202	7.8
Manufacturing	25,414	6.0	925	4.4	22	0.7	0	0.0	306	11.9
Wholesale trade	12,937	3.0	267	1.3	24	0.8	6	0.4	5	0.2
Retail trade	54,468	12.8	1,980	9.3	244	7.8	97	6.3	194	7.5
Transportation and warehousing	18,632	4.4	571	2.7	82	2.6	18	1.2	26	1.0
Utilities	4,477	1.1	222	1.0	30	1.0	14	0.9	92	3.6
Information	9,283	2.2	182	0.9	13	0.4	8	0.5	27	1.0
Finance, insurance, real estate and rental and leasing	23,351	5.5	636	3.0	77	2.4	18	1.2	99	3.8
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	27,654	6.5	968	4.6	116	3.7	35	2.3	87	3.4
Educational services	41,367	9.7	2,660	12.5	534	17.0	304	19.6	291	11.3
Health care and social assistance	51,078	12.0	3,353	15.8	547	17.4	327	21.1	317	12.3
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	44,135	10.4	2,194	10.3	157	5.0	80	5.2	207	8.0
Other services (except public administration)	22,471	5.3	986	4.6	140	4.5	18	1.2	112	4.3
Public administration	25,295	5.9	3,200	15.1	644	20.5	455	29.4	427	16.6
Total persons 16 years and older	425,977	100.0	21,243	100.0	3,146	100.0	1,550	100.0	2,579	100.0

	American Indians							
	Fort Belknap Reservation		Fort Peck Reservation		No. Cheyenne Reservation		Rocky Boy's Reservation	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	55	7.1	102	6.2	37	3.6	20	3.1
Mining	6	0.8	25	1.5	37	3.6	4	0.6
Construction	66	8.5	134	8.1	69	6.7	47	7.2
Manufacturing	5	0.6	30	1.8	19	1.8	7	1.1
Wholesale trade	2	0.3	17	1.0	11	1.1	6	0.9
Retail trade	50	6.5	116	7.0	60	5.8	21	3.2
Transportation and warehousing	8	1.0	33	2.0	3	0.3	6	0.9
Utilities	6	0.8	9	0.5	22	2.1	2	0.3
Information	0	0.0	6	0.4	2	0.2	4	0.6
Finance, insurance, real estate and rental and leasing	33	4.3	56	3.4	19	1.8	15	2.3
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	7	0.9	43	2.6	26	2.5	17	2.6
Educational services	128	16.5	239	14.4	286	27.7	171	26.2
Health care and social assistance	184	23.7	281	17.0	162	15.7	86	13.2
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	23	3.0	155	9.4	50	4.8	69	10.6
Other services (except public administration)	19	2.5	69	4.2	21	2.0	22	3.4
Public administration	183	23.6	342	20.6	207	20.1	155	23.8
Total persons 16 years and older	775	100.0	1,657	100.0	1,031	100.0	652	100.0

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000 Census of Population and Housing.

Table 5
Household Income, by Category
Montana and American Indian Reservations, 2000

	Montana				American Indians					
	Total Population		American Indians		Blackfeet Reservation		Crow Reservation		Flathead Reservation	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Less than \$10,000	40,535	11.3	4,243	22.2	580	23.7	179	14.6	548	21.4
\$10,001 to 29,999	121,275	33.8	7,425	38.8	920	37.6	460	37.4	942	36.8
\$30,000 to 59,999	123,926	34.5	5,342	27.9	686	28.0	436	35.5	725	28.3
\$60,000 to 99,999	53,358	14.9	1,717	9.0	211	8.6	144	11.7	279	10.9
\$100,000 and above	19,976	5.6	389	2.0	53	2.2	10	0.8	68	2.7
Total Household	359,070	100.0	19,116	100.0	2,450	100.0	1,229	100.0	2,562	100.0
Median household income in 1999 (dollars)	\$33,024		\$22,824		\$23,916		\$28,199		\$25,970	

	American Indians							
	Fort Belknap Reservation		Fort Peck Reservation		No. Cheyenne Reservation		Rocky Boy's Reservation	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Less than \$10,000	197	25.1	457	25.2	260	25.3	96	24.2
\$10,001 to 29,999	299	38.0	850	46.9	400	39.0	129	32.6
\$30,000 to 59,999	199	25.3	374	20.6	275	26.8	119	30.1
\$60,000 to 99,999	76	9.7	110	6.1	77	7.5	43	10.9
\$100,000 and above	15	1.9	23	1.3	14	1.4	9	2.3
Total Household	786	100.0	1,814	100.0	1,026	100.0	396	100.0
Median household income in 1999 (dollars)	\$21,458		\$18,464		\$22,179		\$25,333	

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000 Census of Population and Housing.

Furthermore, there were relatively more households on the Crow Reservation in the middle-income categories from \$30,000 to \$99,000. These households may include people with relatively good-paying mining and BIA hospital jobs.

Attitudes about Work-Related Topics

In 2002, the Bureau of Business and Economic Research surveyed the attitudes and opinions of American Indians in Montana about important labor market topics for the state Department of Labor and Industry.

The race identification questions in the questionnaire followed the concepts and procedures developed by the U.S. Census Bureau. There were 411 completed interviews with self-identified American Indians – a number sufficient to provide valid analyses of adult American Indians with telephones in Montana. There were not enough responses to derive separate estimates for each reservation.

When asked what kind of a job they preferred, American Indian respondents overwhelmingly said they wanted a full-time position working during the day. About 84.4 percent of the American Indian respondents said they preferred a full-time position, which was not statistically different from the 77.8 percent of non-Indians who responded the same way. Approximately 68.7 percent of American Indians said they preferred to work during the day, which is also statistically equal to the 71.1 percent of non-Indians who gave the same response.

On average, American Indians said they preferred to work 33.7 hours per week – again, statistically identical to the average of 33.2 hours preferred by non-Indians.

When searching for a job, American Indians said they relied upon:

- The newspaper (77.7 percent),
- Word of mouth (76.0 percent),
- Contact employer directly (49.2 percent), and
- The local job service (43.6 percent).

With the exception of reversing newspapers and word of mouth, non-Indians expressed the same preferences.

Respondents were asked about desirable benefits and what type of firm they would like to work for (Tables 6 and 7). The top five non-wage benefits considered by American Indians were:

- Paid vacation (96.6 percent),
- On-the-job training (96.1 percent),
- Paid holidays (96.0 percent),
- Sick leave (94.4 percent), and
- Retirement plan (93.8 percent).

Child care was the only job benefit for which American Indians and non-Indians differed. American Indians gave higher importance to child care than non-Indians. Child care repeatedly appeared as an important work-related topic among American Indians.

American Indians and non-Indians ranked industries almost identically as desirable places to work. American Indians ranked engineering research firms as the most desirable place to work, followed by software-development companies and technical consulting companies. Non-Indians also ranked these industries as their top three; the only difference was they reversed technical consulting and software-development firms.

Jobs with outbound telemarketing firms were judged least desirable by both American Indians and non-Indians. Welding/fabrication plant jobs and insurance claims positions were next in line as undesirable by both American Indians and non-Indians.

Almost three-fourths of the American Indians surveyed said they had experience with computers. This was not statistically different from the 81.3 percent of the non-Indians who said they had experience with computers. When asked to rate their skills in specific computer applications, American Indians and non-Indians rated themselves about the same. About 48.4 percent of the American Indians said they were skilled to very skilled in word processing, compared with 54.5 percent of the non-Indians.

American Indians were generally more willing than non-Indians to be educated or accept training in work-related areas, but the differences were not statistically significant in specific categories. For example, 76 percent of the American Indians surveyed said they would accept training in information/computer technology as compared to 67.9 percent of the non-Indians. Similarly, 50.3 percent of the American Indians queried said they would accept training in the construction trade, while 39.7 percent of the non-Indians gave the same response.

Child care was identified as one of the most important job-related benefits for American Indians. About 13.7 percent of the American Indian respondents said they used child care, well above the 8.3 percent of non-Indians who gave the same response. American Indians averaged 1.3 children per household for those using child care, not statistically different from 1.5 children per household for

Table 6
If you were to take/change a job,
how important do you consider
these job benefits?
[Percent saying somewhat or very
important]

	American Indians	Non-Indians
Health insurance	89.9	84.5
Child care	58.4	37.5
Flexible hours	84.8	80.5
Sick leave	94.4	88.1
Tuition reimbursement	82.6	71.3
Profit sharing	70.1	76.6
Retirement plan	93.8	93.0
Paid vacation	96.6	95.3
Paid holidays	96.0	93.4
On the Job Training	96.1	94.7
Differential pay	87.7	80.8
<i>Respondents</i>	<i>178</i>	<i>1,177</i>

Source: Montana Rural and Urban Labor Markets Survey 2003. Bureau of Business and Economic Research, The University of Montana-Missoula.

Table 7
Would you work for...?
[Percent saying yes]

	American Indians	Non-Indians
Welding fabrication plant	40.4	38.0
Manufacturing plant	47.2	47.6
Software development company	59.6	53.6
Customer service call center	44.9	40.3
Financial service call center	44.9	45.3
Insurance claims center	34.3	36.5
Outbound telemarketing company	14.0	5.7
Technical consulting company	57.3	61.5
Engineering research company	60.7	62.1
<i>Respondents</i>	<i>178</i>	<i>1,178</i>

Source: Montana Rural and Urban Labor Markets Survey 2003. Bureau of Business and Economic Research, The University of Montana-Missoula.

Table 8
Labor Force Status
Montana, American Indians Reservations

	Montana					American Indians			
	Persons	American Indians	Blackfeet Reservation	Crow Reservation	Flathead Reservation	Fort Belknap Reservation	Fort Peck Reservation	No. Cheyenne Reservation	Rocky Boy's Reservation
Population 16 and older	701,168	43,108	5,563	3,341	5,180	1,727	3,928	2,457	980
In labor force	458,306	26,074	3,359	1,992	3,043	1,022	2,325	1,334	618
In armed forces	3,619	59	2	0	0	0	3	0	3
Civilian	454,687	26,015	3,357	1,992	3,043	1,022	2,322	1,334	615
Employed	425,977	21,243	2,478	1,550	2,579	775	1,657	1,031	436
Unemployed	28,710	4,772	879	442	464	247	665	303	179
Not in labor force	242,862	17,034	2,204	1,349	2,137	705	1,603	1,123	362
Percent of population 16+	34.6	39.5	39.6	40.4	41.3	40.8	40.8	45.7	36.9
Unemployment rate	6.3	18.3	26.2	22.2	15.2	24.2	28.6	22.7	29.1

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000 Census of Population and Housing.

non-Indians. Approximately 52.4 percent of American Indian households using child care reported they had problems finding a quality facility, well above the 30 percent of non-Indians who reported the same difficulty. In summary, although it involves relatively few households, child care was much more important for American Indians, and they had more trouble finding quality care.

Measurement of Unemployment

American Indian unemployment is measured differently by the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). This discrepancy yields very different figures reported in the media and elsewhere – and leads to the apparent contradictions between two federal agencies.

As shown in Table 9, the BIA estimated that the 2000-01 unemployment rate on the Fort Peck Reservation was 63 percent. In Table 8, the 2000 Census (which follows the BLS method) reported an unemployment rate of 28.6 percent on the same reservation.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics unemployment estimates are based on a survey of the population, looking directly at the behavior of those who are not working.

People are classified as unemployed if they do not have a job, have actively looked for work in the prior four weeks, and are available for work. Actively looking for work may consist of any of the following activities:

- Contacting an employer directly or having a job interview; a public or private employment agency; friends or relatives; a school or university employment center;
- Sending out resumes or filling out applications;
- Placing or answering advertisements;
- Checking union or professional registers; or
- Some other means of active job search.

This measure of the behavior of those not working is compared with those counted as part of the labor force.

BLS labor force measures are based on the civilian non-institutional population 16 years old and over. Excluded are people under 16 years of age, all inmates of institutions and persons on active duty in the Armed Forces. All other members of the civilian non-institutional population are eligible for inclusion in the labor force, and those 16 and over who have a job or are actively looking for one are so classified. The remainder – those who have no job and are not

looking for one – are counted as “not in the labor force.” Many who do not participate in the labor force are going to school or are retired. Family responsibilities keep others out of the labor force. Still others have a physical or mental disability which prevents them from participating in the labor force.

Using the BLS approach and looking at the Fort Peck Reservation, Table 8 shows unemployment is equal to the number of unemployed (665) divided by the civilian labor force (2,322) yielding $(665/2,322 = .286)$ a figure of 28.6 percent.



Table 9
BIA Calculation of American Indian Unemployment

	Blackfeet Tribe	Crow Tribe of Montana	Confederated Salish Kootenai	Fort Belknap Indian Community	Assiniboine & Sioux Tribes-Fort Peck	No. Cheyenne Tribe	Chippewa Cree Tribe
Tribal enrollment (A)	15,410	10,450	6,950	5,426	11,248	8,036	5,728
Total eligible for services (1)+(2)+(3)	9,366	7,401	6,163	4,921	7,874	5,030	4,372
Age under 16 (1)	2,754	2,633	1,291	1,169	2,918	2,566	1,714
Age 16-64 (2)	6,054	4,469	4,353	3,382	4,585	2,183	2,465
Age 65 & over (3)	558	299	519	370	371	281	193
Not available for work (4)	463	132	0	343	589	585	172
Available for work or total work force (5)	5,591	4,337	4,872	3,039	3,996	1,618	2,486
Number employed (6)	1,703	1,464	3,115	875	1,471	1,183	602
Number not employed (7)	3,888	2,873	1,757	2,164	2,525	435	1,884
Unemployed as % of labor force (8)	70%	66%	36%	71%	63%	27%	76%

Source: Montana Department of Labor and Industry.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs approach is not based on a survey, but on population measures where the unemployed are simply those people who are not working. So Table 9 shows the BIA measure of unemployment on the Fort Peck Reservation during 2000-2001 as the number available for work (3,996) divided into those not employed (2,525), yielding a 63-percent unemployment rate.

The difference comes from the survey question used by the Bureau of Labor Statistics that distinguishes between those looking for work in the last four weeks from those who were counted as part of the population available for work by the BIA. The BIA counts 2,525 as unemployed, while the BLS counts 665 as unemployed. This difference of 1,860 (less those over 65 amounting to 371 people) is the approximate 34.4 percent difference in the unemployment measures reported by the two agencies.

When the overall population count on any reservation is adjusted to match the BIA and the BLS measures of unemployment, we are left with 34 percent to 38 percent differences in unemployment. The differences are explained by how the BLS and BIA categorize "discouraged workers." Discouraged workers are those who have ceased searching for a job.

Discouraged workers might want to work, but they have demonstrated no effort to get a job, so they are removed from the labor force. Part-time workers are classified as employed, even though they may want to work full-time. Categorizing discouraged workers as part of the labor force would increase the unemployment rate above the Bureau of Labor Statistics level.

To be officially counted as unemployed by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, a person must be actively seeking work. The BIA considers discouraged workers as part of the labor force, and therefore unemployed.

Work continues to more fully understand the characteristics of Montana's American Indian population. The information, and therefore the research, is essential if legislators, agency officials, and tribal leaders are to make well-informed decisions in the years ahead. □

Paul Polzin is director of The University of Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research. Dennis O'Donnell is currently on leave from UM's economics department and has joined forces with BBER for special research projects.
